United Nations

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Second World Assembly on Ageing

Madrid

8-12 April 2002

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Item 6 of the provisional agenda*
Organization of work, including the establishment of the Main Committee of the Assembly

Organization of work and procedural matters

Note by the Secretariat

1. At its second session, the Commission for Social Development acting as the preparatory committee for the Second World Assembly on Ageing approved the provisional agenda (A/CONF.197/1) and the proposed organization of work for the Assembly (see A/CONF.197/3). The provisional rules of procedure for the Assembly (A/CONF.197/2), as approved by the preparatory committee at its first session and by the General Assembly in its decision 56/427 of 19 December 2001, are also submitted to the Assembly for adoption. The proposals contained herein have been prepared on the basis of the above-mentioned documents.

I. Election of officers

2. Rule 6 of the provisional rules of procedure for the Assembly (A/CONF.197/2) provides that the Assembly shall elect from among the representatives of participating States the following officers: a President, 27 Vice-Presidents, an ex officio Vice-President from the host country, a Rapporteur-General and a Chairman for the Main Committee established in accordance with rule 46. Those officials should be elected on the basis of ensuring the representative character of the Bureau composed in accordance with rule 11. The Assembly may also elect such other officers as it deems necessary for the performance of its functions.

3. Rule 11 provides that the Assembly will have a Bureau composed of the President, the Vice-Presidents, the Rapporteur-General and the Chairman of the Main Committee. In accordance with standard practice, the Presidency of the Assembly would go to the host country. The 27 Vice-Presidents would be distributed according to the following geographical pattern: seven representatives from African States, six from Asian States, three from Eastern European States, five from Latin American and Caribbean States and six from Western European and other States.

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II. Adoption of the rules of procedure

4. The Assembly will have before it the provisional rules of procedure approved by the General Assembly (A/CONF.197/2).

III. Adoption of the agenda

5. The Commission for Social Development acting as the preparatory committee for the Assembly recommended the provisional agenda set out in document A/CONF.197/1 for adoption by the Assembly.

IV. Organization of work, including the establishment of the Main Committee of the Assembly

A. Organization of work

6. The proposed organization of work recommended for adoption by the Second World Assembly on Ageing by the Commission for Social Development acting as the preparatory committee is contained in annex II to the draft resolution recommended for adoption by the Assembly (A/CONF.197/3, annex I). Accordingly, it is proposed that the Assembly organize its work through plenary meetings and one Main Committee.

B. Allocation of items

7. It is proposed that items 1 to 8 and 10 of the provisional agenda be considered in plenary meetings, and that item 9 (Political Declaration and International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002) be allocated to the Main Committee. Negotiations on the Political Declaration and International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002 will be carried out in the Main Committee while the general exchange of views on item 8 will take place in plenary meetings. Upon the conclusion of its work, the Main Committee will submit a report to the Assembly.

C. General exchange of views

8. The general exchange of views will take place from 8 to 12 April. Each delegation may present one statement during the general exchange of views.

9. It is proposed that a time limit of seven minutes be established for statements by representatives of Governments, five minutes for statements by representatives of intergovernmental organizations and United Nations programmes and specialized agencies and five minutes for statements by representatives of non-governmental organizations.

D. Establishment of the Main Committee of the Assembly

10. The Main Committee will meet from the morning of 8 April to 11 April. Its Chairman will be elected by the Assembly in accordance with the provisions of rule

6 of the provisional rules of procedure of the Assembly. In accordance with the provisions of rule 49, the Main Committee will elect its own officers. It is recommended that agreement be reached on the slate of candidates for posts falling within the ambit of the Main Committee before the opening of the Assembly, thus permitting elections by acclamation and dispensing with the requirement of a secret ballot. The Main Committee will be seized with finalizing the Political Declaration and the draft International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002. It will also have a limited debate (item 8: General exchange of views) on Monday, 8 April 2002, to hear interventions that could not be accommodated in the plenary.

E. Timetable for the work of the Assembly

11. Proposed timetables for the work of the Assembly and for the work of the Main Committee are contained in annexes I and II, respectively, to the present note.

F. Organization of meetings

12. The resources available to the Assembly allow for a maximum of two simultaneous meetings in the morning and two in the afternoon, with interpretation facilities, including committees, subcommittees, working groups and informal consultations. Interpretation facilities can be provided to regional or interest group meetings only when these are held in place of formal meetings.

13. In accordance with the provisions of rule 48 of the provisional rules of procedure, the Assembly may establish such committees and working groups as it deems necessary for the performance of its functions. Subject to the decision of the plenary of the Assembly, the Main Committee may also set up subcommittees and working groups. It should be noted, however, that committees, subcommittees and working groups can be established only to the extent permitted by the Assembly service facilities available at the Assembly site.

14. Meetings will normally be scheduled from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. and from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. In order to ensure the most efficient use of available resources, it is essential that all meetings start promptly at the time scheduled.

V. Credentials of representatives to the Assembly: appointment of the members of the Credentials Committee

15. Rule 4 of the provisional rules of procedure provides that a Credentials Committee of nine members shall be appointed at the beginning of the Assembly and that its composition shall be based on that of the Credentials Committee of the General Assembly at its fifty-sixth session.

16. At the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly, the Credentials Committee was composed of China, Denmark, Jamaica, Lesotho, the Russian Federation, Senegal, Singapore, the United States of America and Uruguay.

VI. Report of the Assembly

17. In accordance with the practice followed at previous United Nations conferences, it is recommended that the report of the Assembly consist of the decisions of the Assembly, a brief account of the proceedings and a repertorial account of the work of the Main Committee and of the action taken in plenary meeting on its recommendations.

Annex I

Proposed timetable for the work of the Assembly

Plenary

Monday, 8 April		
10 a.m. and 3 p.m.	*Item 1*	Opening of the Assembly
	Item 2	Election of the President
	Item 3	Adoption of the rules of procedure
	Item 4	Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters
	Item 5	Election of officers other than the President
	Item 6	Organization of work, including establishment of the Main Committee
	Item 7	Credentials of representatives to the Conference
		(a) Appointment of the members of the Credentials Committee
		(b) Report of the Credentials Committee
	Item 8	General exchange of views
Tuesday, 9 April		
10 a.m. and 3 p.m.	*Item 8*	General exchange of views (*continued*)
12 noon		Closure of the list of speakers on item 8
Wednesday, 10 April		
10 a.m. and 3 p.m.	*Item 8*	General exchange of views (*continued*)
Thursday, 11 April		
10 a.m. and 3 p.m.	*Item 8*	General exchange of views (*continued*)
Friday, 12 April		
10 a.m. and 3 p.m.	*Item 8*	General exchange of views (*concluded*)
	Item 9	Adoption of the Political Declaration and the International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002
	Item 10	Adoption of the report of the Assembly
		Closure of the Assembly

Annex II

Proposed timetable for the work of the Main Committee

Monday, 8 April		
a.m.* and 3 p.m.		Organization of work
		Election of the Bureau
		Political Declaration and International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002 (item 9)
	Item 8	General exchange of views
Tuesday, 9 April		
10 a.m. and 3 p.m.		Political Declaration and International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002 (item 9) (*continued*)
Wednesday, 10 April		
10 a.m. and 3 p.m.		Political Declaration and International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002 (item 9) (*continued*)
Thursday, 11 April		
10 a.m.		Political Declaration and International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002 (item 9) (*concluded*)
3 p.m.		Action on all outstanding matters
		Conclusion of the work of the Main Committee

* The morning meeting will be held following the adjournment of the organizational part of the plenary meetings.

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Items 8 and 9 of the provisional agenda*
General exchange of views
Political Declaration and International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002

Letter dated 1 April 2002 from the Permanent Representative of Malta addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to attach herewith a paper entitled "Ethical Issues in Old Age" (see annex), and would particularly like to highlight the penultimate paragraph, in which the Government of Malta, inter alia, proposes that the World Assembly submit a request for the establishment of an international task force of experts mandated to prepare a comprehensive report in which they examine the moral questions that face human beings concerning the process of ageing.

I would be very grateful if you were to circulate the present letter and its annex as a document of the Second World Assembly on Ageing, which is scheduled to be held in Madrid, from 8 to 12 April 2002.

(*Signed*) Walter **Balzan**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex

Ethical issues in old age

Whereas

(a) During the latter part of the twentieth century, life expectancy has increased by about 20 years, and is expected to extend a further 10 years by 2050, giving rise to new issues and problems regarding the quality of life;

(b) This success in increasing longevity is widespread, but the expected improvement in quality of life remains unequal;

(c) All governments have shown concern about the challenges resulting from a longer life, but deeper reflection and action are required conjointly from all partners, public and private, corporate and individual, for an adequate response to this phenomenon.

Whereas

(a) In 1969, on the initiative of the Government of Malta, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution giving priority consideration to the phenomenon of ageing;

(b) Malta played an active and important role during the first World Assembly on Ageing, which took place in Vienna from 26 July to 6 August 1982, and in the formulation of the Vienna International Plan of Action on Ageing;

(c) On 15 April 1988, following the adoption of resolution 1987/41 by the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations on 14 May 1987, based on the recommendations of the Plan of Action for worldwide research and training in the field of ageing, and the agreement signed on 9 October 1987 between the United Nations and the Government of Malta, the International Institute on Ageing was officially inaugurated in Malta by the then Secretary-General, Javier Perez de Cuellar.

Whereas

(a) Various declarations relating to the rights of older persons and the formulation of strategies regarding their quality of life have been produced since the first World Assembly by the United Nations, the European Union and other international entities, in the course of which several ethical issues have arisen, not all of which are susceptible to judicial or categorical treatment, but which call for deep moral reflection and responsible commitment by public authorities, non-governmental organizations and individual human beings;

(b) Among such issues, the following may be highlighted:

(i) Preservation of respect for human dignity when there is declining capacity for autonomous decision-making, usually due to increasing physical, intellectual and psychological disabilities;

(ii) Use of language about older persons, in particular, by the young, by those professionals whose work brings them in contact with older persons, by the media and authors and by older persons themselves;

(iii) Use of talents by older persons without self-imposition on others or acceptance of exploitation by others;

(iv) Distribution of responsibilities between relatives and carers, including the conveying or withholding of information;

(v) Reciprocal duties of older and younger generations within the family;

(vi) Distribution of responsibilities between non-governmental organizations and the State, including consideration of compulsory retirement and appropriate work opportunities;

(vii) Differential punishment for crime by and against older persons and other social issues where differential treatment of older persons needs to be considered;

(viii) Envisaging unmarginalized roles for older persons in a global economy;

(ix) Transmission by older persons of the particular kind of wisdom that only age and experience can provide, according to different cultural modalities and at different stages of social development;

(x) Conditions that allow all human beings, including older persons, to show generosity and to exercise magnanimity beyond the exigencies of strict justice. The possibility of this exercise of solidarity is an expression of the unity of mankind.

The Government of Malta proposes that the Second World Assembly on Ageing request the Secretary-General of the United Nations to establish an international task force of experts mandated to prepare a comprehensive report, in which they would examine the moral questions that face human beings concerning the process of ageing.

The task force is not to be required to provide definite answers to all the questions that arise but to ventilate the different solutions that can be reasonably prospected for consideration by public or private decision makers. The objective of the report will be the enhancement of general awareness of the moral issues involving older persons and of responsibility in settling them.